

Police Use of Deadly Force? A Solution.

by George Gold

The Sacramento Bee front page – 1967. "Two dozen armed Negroes entered the state Capitol in Sacramento California at noon today and made their way to the back of the Assembly Chamber before they were disarmed and marched away by the state police." This happened in the midst of the 'power to the people' campaign organized to shine a light on police brutality in the Black community. After more than 50 years, has anything changed?



Los Angeles, 1991. Rodney King was brutally beaten by cops as the whole country watched; somehow he survived.

Unfortunately, there have been hundreds 'ne thousands more killed unnecessarily at the hands of our police just over the last decade. Police departments across the country are all too often participating in behavior that shocks the conscience... and we all watch.

Over this last decade there has been an ever escalating trend in the militarization of our police departments and along with this militarization has come an altitude of 'us versus them' as the default police mindset. Cops see themselves as warriors not guardians. Is it any wonder we go from one killing to the next? These attitudes of us versus them and warrior versus guardian will never lead to peaceful community policing.

Based on the Washington Post Fatal Force database, in 2019, across the United States, 1,004 people were shot and killed by police. In this same year more than 228 police officers committed suicide. That's over 1,200 lives lost unnecessarily. What's wrong with this picture? Clearly not only are our police killing us, the stress of the job is too often too much to handle and our cops are killing themselves in increasing numbers. Wouldn't it be better to have mentally healthy cops on the beat?

Anyone who has played a video game of shoot 'em up can become complacent when it comes to gun violence. But what really shocks the conscience, in real life, is watching the police shooter or police leader in violence do their fatal deeds in full view of their fellow officers.

Police Use of Deadly Force? A Solution.

by George Gold

In May of 2020, in Minnesota, George Floyd was murdered, on camera. Anyone who has watched one of the countless cop shows on television that show explicit violence until we're numb is not surprised by what they saw in the film of Mr. Floyd's murder. It's easy to think, "oh, poor fellow, get off him and get him up." But the more you watch the more you can't help but think, why doesn't someone stop this?

Oh wait, not someone, why not one of the other three cops standing there watching? Three human beings, three cops, with all sorts of training on how to handle confrontations of all kinds and not one of them did anything to stop their fellow officer from killing yet another helpless human being named George Floyd.

These days, 99% of the time, cops are not on patrol alone. They are always at least a pair, and almost immediately of an "officer needs assistance" call, they will be joined by a half dozen or more additional officers at the scene.

We can have all the discussions we want, we can even riot to express our outrage, but until cops on the beat police each other, until the blue code of silence is broken, these police killings will not end.

Today, our society seems hell bent on heroism. We have a media fascination and propagation of calling out to identify a hero every other minute. A doctor, a nurse, a fire fighter, and very often a police officer is at the head of that queue. This objectification and propagation of this heroism thing is the subject for another day, suffice to say there are police heroes out there somewhere, yes? The real hero cops? They are the ones who step in front of their brothers and tell them, stop, stop it right now.

I've seen them on the street when they stop me for speeding. "So sir, do you know how fast you were going? Do you have heavy date you're late for? And can you please show me your driver's license and insurance card? Well, I'm really sorry, I'm going to have to write you a speeding ticket, you were going 75 mph and this is a 55 mph zone. Ok sir! have a nice day."

Or how about that cop (alone) in Georgia who travelled out to a disturbing the peace call in a residential neighborhood. Upon arrival he found several Black teenagers playing basketball in the street and yes, some loud music was playing. Did he call for backup? No. Was he aggressive in talking to the teenagers? No. Did he chat with them politely and quietly? Yes. Did he ask for the basketball and join the game? Yes. That's what community policing is all about.

I don't think that George Floyd got this sort of treatment. So where were these "nice" cops while George Floyd was being murdered?

I have this idea that when cops are in training, in their respective police academies, they graduate, and upon graduation are their thoughts "ahh, finally, I get to bust some heads." No, I don't think so. I think every single young cop out there starts out with an honest desire to "protect and serve."

In my home town of Chico, California in October of 2018, half a dozen police officers surrounded an 8 year old boy, handcuffed him and despite pleas of passersby, refused to take off his handcuffs as he sat on the sidewalk, his hands cuffed behind him, crying uncontrollably. Then in July of 2019 half a dozen police officers surrounded and tackled to the ground and handcuffed an 11 year old girl during a so called welfare check. Fortunately, these incidents did not result in the same sort horrific fatal / could have been avoided outcomes, the likes of which like we saw in the Chico police killings of Tyler Rushing and Desmond Phillips.

Police Use of Deadly Force? A Solution.

by George Gold

De-escalation training, crisis intervention training and the application of these techniques in the field, and, civilian oversight of the police, are imperative. But during all of the events just described, regardless of training, not one cop stood between these victims and their fellow cops' abuse of power.

We can demonstrate all we want, and yes we might even riot to vent our anger, but nothing will change until real hero cops break the blue code of silence and step between we the public and their fellow officers' abuse of power. This is the only solution to ending police violence. This is the moral imperative police officers must take to heart and must act upon.

In the words of Rev. Martin Niemoeller, a German Lutheran pastor and was arrested by the German Gestapo in 1938. He was sent to the Dachau concentration camp, where he remained until he was freed by Allied forces in 1945; he died in 1984.

I didn't speak up.

First they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Communist

Then they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Jew

Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a trade unionist

Then they came for the Socialists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Socialist

Then they came for the Catholics
And I did not speak out
Because I was a Protestant.

Then they came for me
And there was no one left
to speak for me.

© 2020 George Gold, Chico, California, May 29, 2020. Mr. Gold originally hails from Sydney, Australia. Mr. Gold is a computer systems engineer, a Webmaster, and a world traveler.